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# Blundering into Disaster: Surviving the First Century of the Nuclear Age

Joseph M. Scolnick Jr.

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while Richard Perle thought just the opposite;

- both Gerard Smith and Paul Nitze opposed the signing of the SALT I Interim Agreement;

- President Carter admitted that "the Soviets are inclined to be paranoid";

- the purpose of Presidential Directive 59 was not to send signals to the Soviet Union, but to define how to use nuclear weapons most effectively (Carter);

- the arms race is not inherently bad (General Scowcroft);

- McNamara thought that nuclear weapons did not have much effect on the outcome of the Cuban Missile Crisis, while Nitze thought that the American nuclear advantage did have some impact on the outcome of the crisis;

- the ABM Treaty of 1972 was not based on common assumptions or understandings between the United States and U.S.S.R. about the role of nuclear weapons (Nitze);

- both Helmut Schmidt and Edward Heath oppose SDI, in part because it undermines French and British nuclear deterrence;

- since most Western European targets are near the coast and most Soviet targets are inland, European targets are more vulnerable to submarine missile attacks than are Soviet targets (Sir Hermann Bondi).

This book is essential reading for all those interested in Western security. By presenting interviews of leading policymakers, we learn not only about strategic affairs but also

about the Soviet threat, the nature of the international system, and the role of strategic policy in countering Soviet influence and aggression. While the interview format does not lend itself to the development of arguments, it provides an excellent means for presenting diverse ideas about nuclear policy. Charlton's book is strongly recommended both for the novice and the student of military affairs. Because the study is written in clear, succinct prose and because the author provides thoughtful introductions and commentaries to ensure coherent, informative chapters, the former will find the study an invaluable introduction to a topic which is often described in technical, arcane language. And for those familiar with nuclear strategy, this study will illuminate the convictions and beliefs of many of the leading architects of American strategic policy since the early 1960s.

MARK R. AMSTUTZ  
Wheaton College, Illinois

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McNamara, Robert S. *Blundering into Disaster: Surviving the First Century of the Nuclear Age*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1986. 212pp. \$14.95

This book is a disappointment! And it is not because the author has limited himself to trivial issues. His discussion of the dangers of inadvertent nuclear war between the superpowers; his critique of Gorbachev's call for the total elimination of nuclear weapons as well as of

Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative; and his proposals that not only both America and the Soviet Union drastically reduce the number of their strategic nuclear weapons, but also that NATO base its defense of Western Europe primarily on conventional forces certainly are highly interesting and important matters. So what is the book's problem? It is the way McNamara deals with his material.

Nearly all of the information presented is already familiar to the readers of journals such as *International Security*, so this relatively knowledgeable audience is not the one for whom this book is either suitable or intended. Instead, it was written for the general public with its major goal being, unmistakably, one that will generate support for McNamara's record. In order to achieve his objective, he has oversimplified his treatment of opposing views, which he presents as merely "strawmen" to be cut down in a paragraph or two, and ignores much that is not supportive of his position.

Some illustrations: first, he does not discuss the deterrent values of conventional defense and tactical nuclear weapons in severe crisis situations in Western Europe; second, McNamara conveniently "overlooks" the fact that a conventional war between the superpowers, should it occur, would be an unmitigated disaster for tens of millions of people; third, he gives no credible reason to believe that the NATO countries will ever spend the amount

of money he has determined as requisite for strengthening their conventional defenses; fourth, he all but disregards the British, French, and Chinese nuclear forces; and fifth, he "ignores" the reality of nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism as a serious long-term danger to American society. For our former Defense Secretary, the only nuclear danger worth his attention in this work is the one dealing with the rivalry between the superpowers.

*Blundering into Disaster* may be excellent propaganda, but, unfortunately it is a weak book. This is regrettable for two reasons: the author is capable of doing better and the American people deserve better.

JOSEPH M. SCOLNICK, JR.  
Wise, Virginia

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Smith, Perry M. et al. *Creating Strategic Vision: Long-Range Planning for National Security*. Washington, D.C.: National Defense Univ. Press, 1987. 133pp. Approx. \$6

*Creating Strategic Vision* is a collection of four essays by the former commandant of the National War College and three 1985 graduates. Unlike many edited works, the articles complement each other and form a coherent whole. The result of a year-long National Defense University research seminar, clearly it has made a major contribution to the literature.

The problem addressed by the authors is the lack of good, long-range planning throughout the U.S.